

Ship of the Month No. 186

THOMAS J. DRUMMOND

In past issues, we have spoken of several canal-sized steamers which were built in the years before the mass-production of such ships became commonplace. A case in point was the bulk carrier HADDINGTON/MAPLEHILL, which was featured in our October issue.

This time around, we feature a canal steamer which was one of the most handsome of such vessels, but which will not be well-known to most of our younger marine historians. She was built and lost before most of them came on the scene, and she never served for any particularly long period of time under any one houseflag. As well, her untimely loss was the result of the elements and not of the enemy action which brought to an end the lives of so many of our Canadian canallers which served on salt water during two World Wars.

In 1910, the Algoma Central and Hudson's Bay Railway Company, of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, ordered for its Algoma Central Steamship Company a canal-sized bulk carrier from the shipbuilding firm of Archibald McMillan & Sons Ltd. The steamer was built as Hull 438 of the McMillan shipyard at Dumbarton, Scotland, and she was launched on Tuesday, May 3rd, 1910.

Although at first glance this vessel resembled a typical canal-sized package freighter of that era (due to her great depth of hull, such as that possessed by a ship with 'tween decks), she actually was a single-deck bulk carrier, especially designed and strengthened for the carriage of cargoes of steel and rails. In length, she was 257.0 feet overall (247.9 feet between perpendiculars), while she had a beam of 43.7 feet and a depth of hull of 22.8 feet. Her original tonnage was calculated as 2201 Gross and 1664 Net.

She was powered by a triple expansion engine which had cylinders of 20½, 33 and 59 inches diameter, and a stroke of 36 inches. The engine was built for the ship by the firm of Muir & Houston Ltd., of Glasgow, Scotland. Steam for the engine and the auxiliaries was provided by two single-ended Scotch boilers which measured 14 feet by 10½ feet, and which were fired with coal.

The new steamer was christened THOMAS J. DRUMMOND in honour of one of the officials of the railroad. She was enrolled at Sault Ste. Marie and was given official number C.126863. In fact, it was a bit unusual for a canaller built in this period, at a shipyard in the United Kingdom, to be registered in Canada; most of the vessels so built were registered at British ports, particularly in the early years of their careers.

In due course of time, the DRUMMOND made her delivery voyage across the North Atlantic and arrived safely in Canada. She was painted up in her owner's colours of the period, and had an all-black hull with white cabins. Her stack was black, with two red bands and a white band between them. Her foremast was a dark buff colour, while her mainmast was black.

THOMAS J. DRUMMOND had a rather massive-looking hull, with just a bit of sheer. She had a straight stem and a rather heavy counter stern. Her anchors were carried from hawsepipes set close to the stem, just above the loaded waterline and one and a half plates below the level of the spar deck.

The ship was built with a full forecastle, and a closed steel rail ran back for most of the length of the forecastle head. There was a large texas cabin, whose main 'thwartship section provided space for the captain's accommodation and office. A large forward section of the texas, with a rounded front and portholes in it, appears to have provided additional accommodation, most probably for company guests. On the bridge deck above the texas was a large, rounded pilothouse, with seven big windows in its